

**SSROC**

*southern sydney regional  
organisation of councils*

Submission to the Legislative Assembly  
Standing Committee on Public Works

**INQUIRY INTO  
SPORTSGROUND  
MANAGEMENT IN NSW**

Submitted by  
Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils

August 2006

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

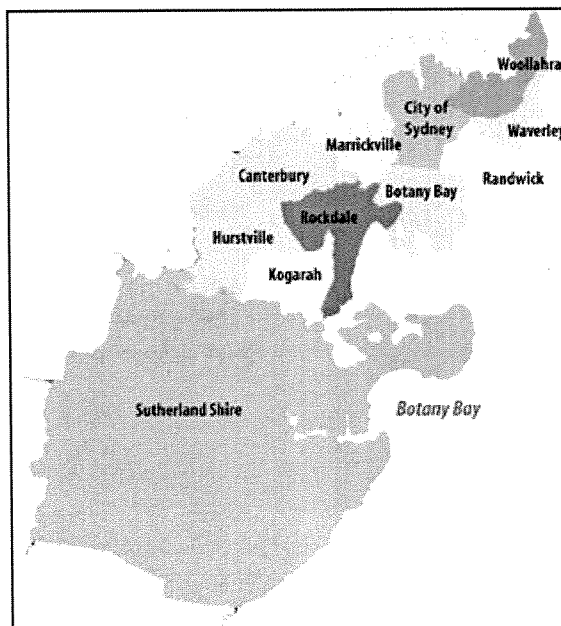
### 1.1 Introduction to SSROC

SSROC is the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, an association of eleven local councils in the southern area of Sydney. SSROC provides a forum for the councils to deal with common issues, particularly those that cross boundaries. SSROC achieves its objectives through advocacy, facilitation of joint activities between councils, project management and governance.

SSROC members are:

- Botany Bay City
- Canterbury City
- City of Sydney
- Hurstville City
- Kogarah
- Marrickville
- Randwick City
- Rockdale City
- Sutherland Shire
- Waverley
- Woollahra

The region covers about one third of the Sydney metropolitan area, extending from the southern shores of Sydney Harbour to the edge of the Royal National Park in the south. Over one million people live in the region - about one quarter of the total population of metropolitan Sydney.



### 1.2 Submission

The Inquiry into Sportsground management is timely indeed, and SSROC welcomes the opportunity to add its voice to the many responses the inquiry will no doubt generate. SSROC's submission will focus on the following terms of reference:

- Adequacy of provision of sportsgrounds to meet community needs
- Cost and revenue arrangements
- Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers
- Access to open space for active and passive recreational users.

## 2. COMMENT ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 2.1 Adequacy of provision of sportsgrounds to meet community needs

#### **Assessment of Recreation Demand and Opportunities in Southern Sydney**

In August 2004, the then Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) released an assessment of recreation demand and opportunities for the Southern Sydney Region. The report:

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- Summarised the recreation opportunities in the Southern Sydney region
  - Developed a regional perspective on current recreation demands and opportunities
  - Identified new recreation opportunities.

The report highlights some of the key recreation and open space assets of the region, including:

- The Royal Botanic Gardens, Hyde Park, The Domain and Sydney Harbour National Park, Botany Bay National Park and the Royal National Park
- Sydney Harbour foreshores
- Internationally recognised beaches such as Bondi, Maroubra and Cronulla
- Open space assets such as Centennial Park, Moore Park, Randwick and Canterbury racecourses, various golf clubs
- University-owned sporting facilities
- Numerous built recreation facilities including indoor aquatic and sports venues
- The waters of Georges River, Sydney Harbour, Port Hacking and Botany Bay.

The report acknowledges that these regional resources attract visitors and users from across Sydney as well as international visitors. The recently released Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney projects that by 2031, Sydney's population will grow by an additional one million people. A significant proportion of future population growth will occur in the southern region of Sydney.

### **Trends**

There has been a marked increase in people participating in recreation and physical exercise. Participation in organised sporting activities has also increased. This, coupled with expected population increases, suggests that demand for sporting, recreation, leisure and cultural facilities will also continue to grow.

### **Demand**

While it is acknowledged that variations within the southern Sydney region will affect demand for recreation facilities in different ways, it is clear that all areas will expect:

- Higher levels of demand
- More pressure to upgrade existing facilities
- Add new facilities
- Cater to new interests

The DIPNR report lists the following demands common to all areas in the SSROC region:

- Linear trails and walkways
- Sports grounds
- Quality playgrounds
- Indoor aquatic centres and ball sports venues
- Informal recreation opportunities
- Various types of trails
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

### **Gaps in Regional Recreation Provision**

The DIPNR report identifies gaps in provision:

- Trails, walkways and cycleways in a range of settings

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- Sports grounds
  - Indoor integrated sports and aquatic facilities
  - Informal social drop-in facilities for young people
  - Recreation opportunities for people with disabilities
  - Regional playgrounds.

### **Priorities for Southern Sydney**

The report identifies the highest recreation demands as:

- Participation in sport – particularly more sports fields
- Informal use of parks
- Connection and travel on trails and routes, particularly new connecting walking and bike trails
- Participation in indoor sports and aquatic facilities.

## 2.2 Cost and revenue arrangements including capital upgrades

### **Funding Arrangements for Acquisition, Maintenance and Capital Costs**

As the Public Works Committee has observed in its discussion paper, local councils largely fund improvement, maintenance and capital costs of recreation infrastructure. A number of local councils have sought special rate variations from the Minister for Local Government to finance sports field reconstruction and embellishment works.

Acquisition of land to provide additional sporting and recreation facilities is generally not a viable option for councils in southern Sydney due to the prohibitive costs of land, and a shortage of available land suitable for such purposes. Alternative arrangements must therefore be pursued.

The DIPNR report identifies the following opportunities:

- Targeting sites for acquisition on a “whole-of-region” basis
- Accessing existing education resources
- Balancing demand.

Local councils across Sydney are actively pursuing many of these options.

## 2.3 Effectiveness of current administration of sportsgrounds by various providers

### **Access to Education Facilities**

A number of local councils are working with schools to gain community access to sporting facilities. Councils and schools have entered into a range of arrangements to share in the development and upgrade of sporting facilities located on school grounds, and where there is goodwill and trust on both sides, these arrangements have worked well.

However, SSROC understands that there is no Departmental-wide approach to this issue, and access is subject to the agreement of the local school principal and the local council. There is no doubt that this option would be more widely used if there were a more formalised arrangement between the Department of Education and local government.

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## Access to Private Recreation Facilities

SSROC urges the Committee to examine ways to access private sporting and recreation facilities. Universities, private schools, golf clubs, etc are an untapped source of recreation infrastructure, and the community would be well served if access to these facilities could be equitably arranged.

### 2.4 Access to open space for active and passive recreational users

The DIPNR report highlights a strong demand for trails in southern Sydney. Cycling and walking have increased in popularity, and existing trails cater for very high traffic from locals and visitors.

SSROC has received funding under the NSW Government's *Metropolitan Greenspace Program* to undertake a feasibility study for a Botany Bay Trail Master Plan.

Informed by the successful San Francisco Bay Trail and identified as a key recreation trail the DIPNR study, the Botany Bay Trail will establish a continuous public pathway around Botany Bay offering a range of levels of interaction including commuter transport and involvement for education and recreation, which can be safely accessed by families and people with a disability.

## 3. CONCLUSION

In summary, SSROC's submission to the Inquiry into Sportsground Management in NSW is:

- The inquiry is timely in light of the pressures on current sportsgrounds
- Pressure on recreation facilities will continue to grow due to population increases and greater participation in organised sporting activities
- The SSROC region has particular demand for linear trails and walkways, sports grounds, playgrounds, indoor aquatic centres, informal recreation opportunities
- Local councils largely fund improvement, maintenance and capital costs of recreation infrastructure
- Alternative funding and usage arrangements need to be pursued
- Access to education facilities would be better facilitated by a formal agreement between local government and the Department of Education
- Universities, private schools, golf clubs, etc are an untapped source of recreation infrastructure, and SSROC urges the Committee to examine ways to gain access to such facilities
- Demand for cycling and walking trails have increased in popularity, and SSROC has undertaken a feasibility study for a Botany Bay Trail Masterplan.

## 4. FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information, contact details are as follows:

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